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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: ANOTHER BLAST ON BORDER, ABKHAZIA DECLARES STATE
OF EMERGENCY

REF: TBILISI 1141

¶1. (SBU) Summary: An additional explosion occurred in Georgian-controlled territory near the administrative boundary with Abkhazia on July 2. No injuries were reported. Abkhaz separatist leaders declared a state of emergency on July 1, following earlier blasts (reftel). Georgian leaders blamed the explosions on "criminal elements" in Abkhazia and are investigating this latest incident. The Abkhaz are blaming the blasts on Georgian efforts bent on scaring away foreign tourists. Separately, a Russian ferry company has begun transporting Russian citizens between Sochi and Gagra. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) UNOMIG confirmed press reports that a small-scale blast occurred on a road along the Abkhaz de facto border between CIS Peacekeeping Forces (PKF) checkpoint 301 and a Georgian police checkpoint near Zugdidi on July 2. The blast occurred between 0700 and 0730, in Georgian-controlled territory near the S12 Inguri river crossing. No injuries are reported. The type of explosives is unknown, but UNOMIG said plastic is suspected. UNOMIG said a car was observed passing the Georgian police checkpoint and it turned around approximately 80 meters before the PKF post. The explosion was heard on the road seconds later. A UNOMIG patrol and Georgian law enforcement officials were present at the site at 1130. The MOIA confirmed to Poloff that Georgian forensic investigators were investigating the blast.

¶3. (U) Following explosions on June 29 and 30, Abkhaz separatist leaders announced a state of emergency in Abkhazia, following their decision to close the border and Inguri river crossings on July 1 (reftel). The decision forbids Georgian residents of the Gali district in Abkhazia to cross the administrative boundary to Zugdidi. Ruslan Kishmaria, head of the Gali Abkhaz administration, said the state of emergency would remain in effect until the perpetrators of blasts in Sokhumi and Gagra (reftel) are arrested. De facto Abkhaz President Sergey Bagapsh blamed the blasts on the Georgians. He and other Abkhaz leaders have indicated the attacks are aimed at disrupting Abkhazia's tourism industry. He said the state of emergency would remain in place for the entire summer. According to the Georgian press, the state of emergency will also require Gali residents as young as 14 years old to serve in the Abkhaz armed forces.

¶4. (U) Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgenedze publicly decried the state of emergency as "archaic, irresponsible, and absurd." He said the ban on travel only hurts the residents of Abkhazia and offers them no better economic alternative. Georgian Foreign Minister Eka Tkeshelashvili told the press that residents of Abkhazia are "hostages" of Russia, which is controlling everything in Abkhazia. She also blasted reported Russian Foreign Ministry plans to open a representative office in Abkhazia. In other press reports,

Georgian NSC Secretary Alexander Lomaia blamed the June 29 and 30 blasts on "criminal Russian businesses" in Abkhazia. He alleged the blasts were the result of power struggles between these "illegitimate" Russian businesses.

15. (U) Additional press reports on July 1 quoted Ganmukhuri Youth Camp supervisor Levan Meskhia as saying Russian Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters had flown over the disputed camp near the Abkhaz border on June 30 for 15-20 minutes at a low altitude. Meskhia alleged the helicopters acted on behalf of the PKF and were filming the camp with cameras. UNOMIG confirmed they received a complaint about the flights from the Georgians. UNOMIG personnel did not observe the helicopters.

16. (U) Georgian press also reported that a Russian transport company announced it was opening a ferry service between Sochi (in Russia) and Gagra (in Abkhazia) on July 2. The company "Olympia Line" reportedly brought its first passengers to Gagra aboard a 200-passenger, sea-going vessel. It said it would make the 40-minute run four times per day, and the only identification required is a Russian passport. Georgian officials have cited this ferry service as additional evidence of Russia's intentions to increase economic links to Abkhazia and to further undermine Georgia's territorial integrity.
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